

A Brilliant Light

THE airman's lighthouse, which it is proposed to erect on Mont Afrique, in the center of France, will possess the most brilliant light on earth, of 1,000,000,000 candle power.



Fiction Page



The Bride in India

WHEN the girl of India becomes a bride, she stands on a large plate filled with rose-colored sweetmeats, a custom unique among wedding ceremonies and in keeping with the Eastern love of display.

THE FORTUNE HUNTER - By Ruby M. Ayres

A Seeker of Thrills Finds Himself Mistaken for Another and Thereby Becomes Enmeshed in a Maze of Love and Mystery.

(Continued from Yesterday.)

ANNE was sitting up now, her hands clasped in her lap, her face white and tense. "You, Mr. Fernie!" she breathed, and then as he nodded she broke out agitatedly: "But why—why?" Old Fernie made no answer for a moment, but he looked swiftly across at the Fortune Hunter, then said slowly:

"Well, I've my own reasons; they don't matter for the moment, but I'm not such a poor man as everyone in Somerton seems to suppose, and I can well afford to repay Mr. Harding, if he will accept."

"But—but—" Mr. Harding spluttered, "it's all such an extraordinary thing! You told me you hated John—this man! You told me that you meant to ruin him, and now—good gracious, man! What are your reasons? Have you taken leave of your senses?"

"Never mind my reasons, Mr. Harding," Fernie answered, and there was a certain dignity about the old man as he stood there, quite unmoved in the midst of all the excitement. "There's my offer. Will you take it or leave it?"

The Fortune Hunter broke in then. "It's not for Mr. Harding to choose, it's for me to say if I will allow you to pay my debts, and I refuse to allow you to do so. I absolutely refuse!"

His eyes blazed as they met Fernie's. "I'd rather go to prison, if that's where you're all so bent on sending me," he added recklessly.

Mr. Harding veered round again. "And doesn't it occur to you that you owe my niece some slight consideration?" he asked sharply. "If by accepting this man's offer—though for the life of me I cannot understand why he has made it—you can save her in some slight measure, isn't it your duty to accept? Haven't you any thought for her at all?"

I WANT HIM TO GO.

The Fortune Hunter's face whitened; he looked at Anne. "It's for Miss Harding to decide," he said after a moment with an effort. "I am willing to do as she wishes."

"I have no wishes in the matter," Anne rose to her feet; her face was quite colorless, but she waved Geoffrey Foster away when he would have supported her. "As far as I am concerned, this thing is ended and done with," she went on, and her voice was flat and expressionless.

"If it is anyone's place to—to prosecute this gentleman," she waved a little—"it is mine, and I have no such wish or intention. I only want him to go; and I hope I shall never see him again."

There was a moment's profound silence. Tommy fidgeted from one foot to the other, and shot the Fortune Hunter a triumphant glance, and Geoffrey Foster moved forward with more confidence and leaned over Anne, taking her hand in his, as she sank back on to the couch.

The Fortune Hunter seemed the most unmoved of them all. He stood there, his hands in his pockets, his head thrown back defiantly, a mocking smile on his lips.

Then suddenly Mr. Harding spoke. "She is right; it shall be as she wishes," he said.

He raised his hand and pointed to the door, his eyes fixed on the Fortune Hunter's defiant face. "Go," he said, "before I change my mind."

The Fortune Hunter laughed aloud. He turned swiftly on his heel, and in another moment would have gone, but that old Fernie caught him by the coat.

"You shall not go," he said, and there was a ring of command in his voice that struck strangely on the silent room. "You shall not go until I have had my say."

He crushed his old felt hat nervously in his hand, but he was self-possessed enough as he looked steadily at Mr. Harding.

"This man is my son," he said. "Tommy gave a loud gasp, but nobody else moved or spoke. Anne had hidden her face in her hands and Mr. Harding stood like a man turned to stone."

"This man is my son," old Fernie said again, his hand still clutching the Fortune Hunter's coat. "I never knew it till two days ago, but it's true enough. This man is my son, and as his father I claim the right to make

I've lived in Somerton, and blood's thicker than water!" he added awkwardly.

The Fortune Hunter turned to the window and stood looking into the garden for a moment without answering; then he replied slowly, as if he were carefully choosing his words:

"It's kind of you, and I'm grateful, but—it won't do. I took the money, and I must pay it back."

"I can work if I like. I've navvied for months with the roughest of them."

"There'll be no need for you to work at all—when I'm gone," the old man said. "Come, come; you've got all your mother's obstinacy and pride, I can see that, but it doesn't always pay. Think it over for the sake of this girl, if not for your own. She cares for you—in spite of them all."

The Fortune Hunter turned slowly round, his eyes incredulous. "Cares for me!" he laughed. "She said she never wished to see me again."

"Women never mean what they say," Fernie insisted. The Fortune Hunter shrugged his shoulders.

"I think Miss Harding does—and she's right. I'm not fit for her or any other woman. I've nothing to offer her, not even a decent past. I'll go back to the road; I belong there. I'm glad it's all over—this business here. I couldn't have stood it much longer anyway."

He turned round and looked old Fernie up and down with a softened smile.

"Where do I get my bad strain from?" he asked, half-mirthfully, half in bitterness. "Not from my mother, I'll swear."

"No," Fernie agreed; "she was a good woman. If she hadn't been she might have found it easier to live with me. However—he cleared his throat loudly—"that's all done with. I'm sorry you won't let me help you out; I should have found it a pleasure," he spoke awkwardly, avoiding his son's eyes. "But you can't prevent me from leaving you what I've got when I go," he added, "and as far as Mr. Harding and the rest of 'em are concerned, they won't trouble you, John—I beg your pardon—that's not your name, I know."

He rubbed his chin. "Do you know that ever since you came down to my place the other night I've been trying to remember what it was, and bless my soul if I can."

"My name is Robert," the Fortune Hunter said. Old Fernie laughed rather constrainedly.

"Bless me, so it is! We named

you after the vicar who married us. I remember. Your mother thought the world of him. Dear me! How it all comes back."

GOOD-BY.

The clock on the shelf chimed, and the Fortune Hunter turned from his contemplation of the dark garden; it was half past eight!

He roused himself with an effort. "Well, I'll be getting along," he said.

Fernie paled a little. "Not tonight. Come home with me if you can't stay here."

The Fortune Hunter laughed. "Here?" he said eloquently. "Come home with me then," the old man urged rather pathetically. "It's a small place, but you're welcome."

The Fortune Hunter shook his head.

"It's kind of you, but I'll be getting along." His eyes turned wistfully toward the door.

There was a moment's silence, then Fernie held out his hand. "I should like—," he began, but there was no need for him to finish, the Fortune Hunter took his hand in a warm grip.

"Good-by, and—thank you," he said.

"And if there's ever anything I can do," the old man said huskily, "you know where to find me?"

Their hands fell apart, and the Fortune Hunter opened the door and went into the hall.

If only he could see Anne just once more—just for one moment! But he could not expect it; she had done with him forever.

By force of habit he took his coat from the hallstand—the coat which was not his—and his hat and turned blindly to the front door.

CHAPTER XXXV.

"Don't Go."

"Don't go—oh, don't go!" she pleaded.

The words were only a whisper, but beat against his heart as if they had been loud enough to fill all the spaces of the world, and for a moment he stood like a man turned to stone, not daring to look at her, not daring to believe that he had heard straight,

until she said again, her voice all broken with tears: "Don't go! Oh, don't go!"

He turned slowly round, his face marble white. "You don't understand what you're saying," he broke out hoarsely. "You don't know what it means. I'm a waster, a blackguard, everything Mr. Harding called me, and—and even if I were not—what have I to offer you? Nothing! I've lied to you. I've deceived you!"

"You said you loved me," she whispered.

"Love you?" He caught his breath with a hard sound. Her hand stole up till it rested on his shoulder.

"Wasn't it—true?" she asked painfully.

He dared not trust himself to answer. He broke out again desperately: "I'm Fernie's son, and you always hated him!"

There was a long silence; then she said, so faintly that he hardly caught the words: "I don't care whose son you are—I love you."

The Fortune Hunter looked away from her to the open door and the moonlit road; the blood was roaring in his ears; a thousand voices of temptation whispered at his heart.

Why go, when she loves you? Love and life and happiness are waiting for you here, if you will but take them.

He laughed aloud, as if the voices had been real. Love! Without trust, without truth? It could never be.

CHARACTERS IN THE STORY

THE FORTUNE HUNTER—Youthful tramp, who appropriates the pocketbook and identity of John Smith, whose body he discovers in the woods.

ANNE—Beautiful heiress, who loves The Fortune Hunter, believing him to be John Smith, ex-convict, who wooed and won her ten years before the opening of the story.

TOMMY—Ward of Mr. Harding, a crippled boy, whose life The Fortune Hunter saves, thereby gaining entrance to the Harding household.

DR. HARDING—Uncle of Anne, a shrewd country gentleman.

FERNIE—A prying trouble maker, friendly to Tommy.

FOSTER—A rival for Anne's favor.

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There was a long silence; then she said, so faintly that he hardly caught the words: "I don't care whose son you are—I love you."

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He broke out again wildly. "I can't! I've no right! Let me go! I'm not fit to touch you, I—"

Her hand fell away from his. "And you were going—without a word to me?"

"What else could I do? You said you wished it, and you are right. I've had my glimpse of Paradise, more than I deserve. Let me go."

"And what about me?" she said, as she had done once before that evening. He made a gesture of despair.

"You!" he echoed brokenly. "My dear, what can I do for you?"

"You can stay with me," she said.

She spoke bravely enough; then, quite suddenly, her courage seemed to fail; she swayed and would have fallen but for his arm.

He dropped his coat and half led, half carried her into the library. The fire had burned low and the room was empty when he put her gently into a chair and stood watching her with broken-hearted eyes.

He opened it and the rush of night air smote his face with a flood of cold memory.

Never to see her again, never to hear her voice! His punishment was greater than he could bear.

"John!" The name was spoken in a trembling whisper, and he wheeled round, blinded with wild hope and the agony of relief to find Anne standing there behind him.

For a moment Anne and the Fortune Hunter looked at one another without speaking; then, suddenly, before the pain and humiliation of her eyes, he broke out in passionate incoherence:

"I'm sorry. Try to forgive me some day. I've lost everything—everything."

Her sad eyes wandered over his face and then past him to the open door and the moonlit world beyond.

"Where are you going?" she asked faintly.

He tried to smile, but his lips twitched badly. "Back to the road—where I came from." And then, with a desperate effort, he steadied his voice sufficiently to add: "It's kind of you—to say good-by to me. I hadn't dared hope—" He could not go on; he half turned away, and with sudden, passionate impulse she caught his arm.

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